

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EC TRANSPORT COUNCIL, DECEMBER 16, 1976: RESULTS

REF: EC BRUSSELS 11068

1. SUMMARY: THE DECEMBER 16 EC TRANSPORT COUNCIL CONCEN-
TRATED ON ROAD TRANSPORT ISSUES, INCLUDING THE CONTROVERSIAL
QUESTION OF WHETHER SUPER-WEIGHT TRACTOR TRAILERS SHOULD BE
ALLOWED ONTO UK, IRISH AND DANISH HIGHWAYS. COUNCIL
ACTION ON INDIVIDUAL AGENDA ITEMS IS DISCUSSED BELOW.
END SUMMARY.

2. RESTRICTIONS ON TRACTOR TRAILERS
THE COUNCIL DISCUSSED NEW SUGGESTIONS FROM THE COMMISSION
AIMED AT BREAKING A FOUR-YEAR DEADLOCK OVER MAXIMUM WEIGHTS
FOR "JUGGERNAUT" TRACTOR TRAILERS WITHIN THE EC. ARGUING
POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE, THE UK, IRELAND, AND DEN-
MARK HAVE REFUSED TO GO BEYOND THEIR CURRENT 31-TON LIMITS,
WHILE THE OTHER SIX MEMBER STATES HAVE LIMITS VARYING FROM
38 TONS (FRG AND FRANCE) TO 50 TONS (NETHERLANDS).
SINCE 1972, THESE SIX HAVE FAVORED STANDARDIZED
LIMITS OF 40 TONS, WITH A MAXIMUM WEIGHT PER AXLE OF
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11 TONS. THE UK, IRELAND, AND DENMARK HAVE HELD OUT
FIRMLY FOR 10-TON AXLE WEIGHT MAXIMA, ON THE GROUNDS
THAT ANY INCREASE WOULD INVOLVE HIGHER ROAD REPAIR
AND MAINTENANCE COSTS. THE COMMISSION'S NEW SUG-
GESTIONS CALL FOR 40-TON MAXIMUM LADEN WEIGHT, WITH
10-TON AXLE WEIGHT LIMITS.

3. THE MINISTERS DID NOT TAKE ANY DECISIONS ON THE ISSUE, BUT DID ASK THAT THE COMMISSION SUBMIT ITS SUGGESTIONS AS A FORMAL PROPOSAL. COREPER IS TO STUDY TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE ISSUE, AS WELL. UK SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT WILLIAM RODGERS TOLD REPORTERS HE WELCOMED THE 10-TON AXLE WEIGHT LIMIT PROPOSAL, SAYING THAT IT WOULD SATISFY A MAJOR UK CONCERN. HE POINTED OUT THAT HMG REMAINS TO BE COMPLETELY SATISFIED ON THE NOISE AND POLLUTION ASPECTS OF ADMITTING LARGER TRUCKS.

4. VEHICLE ROADWORTHINESS TESTS
THE COUNCIL ADOPTED THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSED DIRECTIVE ON COORDINATING TESTING PROCEDURES FOR COMMERCIAL AND CERTAIN PASSENGER VEHICLES. LARGELY BECAUSE OF UK AND IRISH CONCERNS OVER COSTS, THE SCOPE OF THE DIRECTIVE WAS CONFINED TO SPECIFICATION OF MINIMUM FREQUENCY OF TESTING AND CONTENT OF TESTS, AS WELL AS TO CATEGORIES OF VEHICLES TO BE TESTED (TRUCKS OVER 3.5 TONS, BUSES WITH 8-PERSON OR GREATER CAPACITIES, TAXIS, AND AMBULANCES). MEMBER STATES REMAIN FREE TO APPLY HIGHER STANDARDS AND TO TEST FURTHER CATEGORIES OF VEHICLES IF THEY SO DESIRE. THE DIRECTIVE PROVIDES FOR A 6-YEAR TRANSITIONAL PERIOD FROM ITS ADOPTION. DURING THE FIRST YEAR, MEMBER STATES ARE REQUIRED TO ADAPT NATIONAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE DIRECTIVE; WHILE THE PROVISIONS THEMSELVES WOULD BE BROUGHT INTO FORCE GRADUALLY OVER THE FOLLOWING FIVE YEARS.

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5. INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT OF PERISHABLE FOODSTUFFS
THE COUNCIL DISCUSSED PROBLEMS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE COMMISSION IN ITS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS AGREEMENT ON THE TRANSPORT OF PERISHABLE FOODSTUFFS (ATP), WHICH CAME INTO FORCE IN THE FRG, FRANCE, AND DENMARK IN NOVEMBER 1976. THE OTHER EC MEMBER STATES HAVE SIGNED THE AGREEMENT BUT HAVE FACED SLOWER RATIFICATION PROCEDURES. THE COMMISSION HAS POINTED OUT THAT PROBLEMS MAY CONSEQUENTLY ARISE REGARDING MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF CERTIFICATES OF CONFORMITY WITH ATP PROVISIONS, WHICH FRG, FRANCE, AND DANISH AUTHORITIES ARE NOW OBLIGED TO REQUIRE FROM VEHICLES OF THE OTHER SIX MEMBER STATES. THE COUNCIL OPTED IN FAVOR OF TEMPORARY TRANSITIONAL SOLUTIONS NOTING THAT THE COMMISSION AND MEMBER STATE AUTHORITIES WOULD BE WORKING CLOSELY ON THE MATTER.

6. FOLLOW-UP TO NOVEMBER 4 TRANSPORT COUNCIL

THE COUNCIL APPROVED THE DIRECTIVE ON MINIMUM TRAINING LEVELS FOR ROAD TRANSPORT DRIVERS AND THE REGULATION ON AUTHORIZATION QUOTAS FOR INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRANSPORT (REFTEL).

7. COMMON RULES FOR ROAD TRANSPORT

THE COUNCIL DISCUSSED A PROPOSED DIRECTIVE AIMED AT LIBERALIZING ROAD TRANSPORT OF CERTAIN GOODS (SUCH AS LIVE ANIMALS AND CORPSES) BETWEEN MEMBER STATES AND AT FREEING THEM FROM QUOTA RESTRICTIONS AND RED TAPE WHICH MIGHT DELAY TRANSIT. COREPER IS TO CONTINUE WORK ON THE FILE AND REPORT BACK TO THE MARCH TRANSPORT COUNCIL.

8. RAILWAY POLICY

THE COUNCIL DECIDED TO SEND A LETTER TO THE NATIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RAILWAY COMPANIES, REQUESTING THEM TO STEP UP THEIR COOPERATION. FRG TRANSPORT MINISTER GSCHEIDLE, WHO WAS ABSENT FROM THE COUNCIL, SENT A LETTER TO HIS COLLEAGUES STRESSING THAT GERMANY'S ROAD SYSTEMS ARE RAPIDLY BECOMING OVERBURDENED AND THAT THE COST OF MAINTENANCE HAS AMOUNTED TO 185 BILLION DM SINCE 1961. HE ADVOCATED GREATER RESORT TO RAIL TRANSPORT, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS WANING AND UNDERUTILIZED. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE MEMBER STATE RAILWAYS ALL FACE OPERATING DEFICITS AND THAT THEIR INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT ARE INADEQUATE TO CURRENT NEEDS. HE ADDED THAT CUSTOMS FORMALITIES WERE TOO CUMBERSOME AND SLOW. THE COUNCIL AGREED TO INCLUDE A DISCUSSION OF THE POINTS RAISED BY GSCHEIDLE ON THE AGENDA FOR ITS MARCH MEETING.

9. THE COUNCIL TOOK NOTE OF THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO PREPARE, BEFORE JANUARY 1, 1978, A WORK PROGRAM ON SUPPLEMENTARY MEASURES TO FURTHER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE MEMBER STATES AND THE RAILWAY COMPANIES.

10. SOCIAL MEASURES

THE MINISTERS DISCUSSED AND APPROVED GUIDELINES FOR FURTHER COREPER DELIBERATIONS ON THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION ON HARMONIZATION OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION RELATING TO ROAD TRANSPORT.

11. DUTCH STATEMENT ON EASTERN EUROPE ROAD HAULAGE

THE COUNCIL TOOK NOTE OF A STATEMENT BY DUTCH TRANSPORT MINISTER WESTERTEP (THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT),

WHO PUT ON RECORD HIS GOVERNMENT'S VIEW THAT GREATER USE SHOULD BE MADE OF EC INSTITUTIONS FOR EXCHANGES OF IDEAS AND POSSIBLE COORDINATION ON ROAD HAULAGE ISSUES INVOLVING THIRD COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES. HE CITED DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING ADEQUATE RECIPROCAL QUOTAS FROM CERTAIN, UNSPECIFIED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EASTERN BLOC COUNTRIES, AND STRESSED THAT, ALTHOUGH THE VOLUME INVOLVED WAS NOT SIGNIFICANT, THESE DIFFICULTIES PARALLELED PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED WITH THE EAST EUROPEANS IN THE AIR TRANSPORT AND MARITIME SECTORS (SEE REFTEL FOR BACKGROUND ON KLM/AEROFLOT DISPUTE). HE NOTED THAT SOME COORDINATION WAS ALREADY TAKING PLACE IN THE EC'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND IN THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THIS COOPERATION COULD BE EXPANDED, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF PREPARATIONS FOR THE BELGRADE CSCE FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE. ACCORDING TO COUNCIL SOURCES, WESTERTERP DID NOT SEEK ANY IMMEDIATE REACTION FROM HIS COLLEAGUES; AND IT WAS AGREED THAT HIS VIEWS WOULD BE TAKEN UP DURING THE MARCH TRANSPORT COUNCIL SESSION. HINTON

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